

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 AF-10 EUR-25 ACDA-19 USSS-00

TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-20 INRE-00 CCO-00 DRC-01 /144 W

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R 200930Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0194

INFO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USMISSIN USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 8379

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IS

SUBJ: IDF CASUALTIES AS A DOMESTIC POLITICAL FACTOR

1. WE REPORTED IN EARLY STAGE OF WAR WIDESPREAD FEAR IN ISRAEL THAT EXTENT OF CASUALTIES, NOTABLY IN FIRST DAY OR SO OF WAR, HAD BEEN VERY HIGH. IN COUR CONTACTS DURING FIRST WEEK WE FOUND THAT ANGUISH OVER THIS SUPPOSITION WAS TRANSLATING ITSELF INTO CRITICISM OF GOI FOR NOT HAVING MOBILIZED EARLIER AND NOT HAVING TAKEN PREEMPTIVE MILITARY ACTION AND INTO PREDICTIONS OF BITTER POLITICAL ATTACK ON LABOR ALIGNMENT OVER THIS ISSUE FOLLOWING WAR. SUCH CRITICISM UNDOUBTEDLY WOULD HAVE BEEN HEARD EVEN WITHOUT FEARS RE HIGH CASUALTIES, AND FEARS RE CASUALTIES PROBABLY SERVED SIMPLY TO MAKE THIS CRITICISM STRONGER.

2. CASUALTY TOTAL RELEASED BY GOI OCTOBER 14 WAS CONSIDERABLY LOWER THAN EXPECTED. OCTOBER 14 ALSO WAS FIRST DAY IN WAR THAT GOI INFORMED NEXT OF KIN ABOUT KNOWN FATALITIES; UNTIL THEN ONLY FAMILIES OF WOUNDED HAD RECEIVED NOTIFICATION. FATALITY NOTIFICATIONS WERE CARRIED OUT IN MOST HUMANE MANNER FACE TO FACE BY TWO TO FOUR-PERSON TEAMS, INCLUDING AT LEAST CONFIDENTIAL

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ONE IDF OFFICER AND PHSYCHIATRIST OR PHYSICIAN: AFTER FIRST

NOTIFICATION IN EACH NEIGHBORHOOD, TEAM COVERING NEIGHBORHOOD
REQUESTED MEMBER OF FIRST FAMILY TO ACCOMPANY TEAM ON SUBSEQUENT
NOTIFICATIONS TO HELP EASE GRIEF OF OTHERS BY SHOW OF SOLIDARITY.

3. RELIEF FOR THOSE WORRIED FAMILIES WHICH DID NOT RECEIVE
NOTIFICATIONS OCTOBER 14 WAS OF COURSE GREAT. COMPLETION OF
NOTIFICATIONS ON THAT DATE, AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SMALLER TOTAL
THAN EXPECTED, TOOK MUCH TENSION OUT OF AIR IN ISRAEL. IT DID
NOT CURE PROBLEM, HOWEVER, AS ISRAELIS WERE QUICHE TO NOTE THAT
TOTALS RELEASED OF KILLED AND WOUNDED IN ACTION WERE NOT ACCOM-
PANIED BY TOTAL OF PERSONNEL MISSING IN ACTION -- MANY OF WHOM
MAY TURN OUT TO BE FATALITIES.

4. OUR CONTACTS HAVE GENERALLY SUPPOSED SINCE OCTOBER 14
THAT CASUALTY RATE HAS NOT BEEN PARTICULARLY HIGH. IMPRESSION
PREVAILS THAT IDF OPERATIONS ARE BEING CONDUCTED IN SUCH
FASHION AS TO MINIMIZE CASUALTIES. THEREFORE, CASUALTY
ISSUE AT END OF SECOND WEEK OF WAR, UNLIKE AT END OF FIRST
WEEK, IS NOT A BURING POLITICAL SUBJECT.

5. THIS IS NOT TO SUGGEST THAT CASUALTY FACTOR IS NOT VERY
MUCH IN PSYCHOLOGICAL BACKGROUND HERE OR THAT IT DOES NOT
WEIGH SPECIFICALLY IN ISRAELI DECISIONS ABOUT CONDUCT OF WAR
AND ITS POSSIBLE EARLY TERMINATION OR PROLONGATION. AND IT
WILL PROBABLY FIGURE VERY MUCH IN BITTER POLITICAL DEBATE AFTER
WAR. BUT AS OF THIS MOMENT, IT IS NOT A SOURCE OF SHARP
TENSION, AND CONTENTION, WITHIN COUNTRY.

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